

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2226

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: APER, ASEC, AFSP, AR

SUBJECT: EFFECTS OF STAFF REDUCTION

REF: STATE 177705

1. THE AUTHORIZED COMPLEMENT FOR EMBASSY BUENOS AIRES HAS BEEN REDUCED FROM 164 AMERICAN POSITIONS ON JULY 1, 1974 TO 88 POSITIONS ON AUGUST 1, 1975. (THESE FIGURES EXCLUDE MSG'S AND PPSU'S). CUTS WERE MADE IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF USG PERSONNEL WHO COULD BE TARGETS OF TERRORIST ACTS. WHILE EMBASSY HAS CONTINUED TO PERFORM ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS AND PROVIDE USUAL SERVICES, COMPRESSION HAS RESULTED IN SOME CHANGES IN WORKLOADS AND PRIORITIES.

2. THE EASIEST TO CUT WERE THE OFFICES WITH REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES. AMONG OFFICES AFFECTED WERE DEA REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS, FAA REPRESENTATIVE, VOA CORRESPONDENT, USIS REGIONAL BOOK OFFICER, AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE AND APHIS VETERINARIAN. REMOVAL OF THE FIRST TWO OFFICES HAS NOT AFFECTED OPERATIONS IN BUENOS AIRES. THE FAA INTERESTS IN ARGENTINA ARE NOW COVERED BY ATLANTA REGIONAL OFFICE SUPPORTED BY OCCASIONAL VISITS BY THE FAA REPRESENTATIVE IN LIMA. THE TRANSFER OF THE AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE TO MONTEVIDEO IS MORE DIFFICULT TO COMPENSATE BECAUSE OF THE SINGULAR IMPORTANCE OF ARGENTINE AGRICULTURE AND CATTLE INDUSTRY. ACCURATE REPORTING IN THESE FIELDS REQUIRES PROXIMITY TO TRADE SOURCES.

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3. THE POLITICAL SECTION HAS BEEN REDUCED BY ONE SENIOR OFFICER. THERE REMAIN FOUR OFFICERS, INCLUDING THE LABOR/POLITICAL OFFICER. THEY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THEIR MISSION WITH MANY COMPLIMENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT, BUT BY WORKING LONG HOURS, ESPECIALLY WHILE THE COUNSELOR IS ON HOME LEAVE.

4. THE CLOSING OF THE US TRADE CENTER THREW AN EXTRA LOAD ON THE ECON/COMMERCIAL SECTION. CERTAIN LOW PRIORITY TYPES OF TRADE PROMOTION HAVE BEEN DROPPED. ECONOMIC REPORTING HAS BEEN THINNED WHILE PRIORITIES HAVE BEEN RE-EVALUATED, BUT ALL ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS HAVE BEEN MAINTAINED AND PERFORMED.

5. REDUCTION OF TWO AMERICANS IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION (GSO AND PERSONNEL OFFICERS) HAVE CAUSED STRAIN IN THE SECTION. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT ONE AMERICAN BE ADDED TO SUPERVISE THE GENERAL SERVICES AND PERSONNEL FUNCTIONS NOW PERFORMED BY A TOTAL OF 44 LOCALS. OF THE 67 AUTHORIZED LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS, ONLY 12 (SECURITY AND BUDGET & FISCAL) NOW RECEIVE DIRECT AMERICAN SUPERVISION.

6. THE POSITION OF SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR NARCOTICS HAS BEEN ELIMINATED INASMUCH AS THIS NEVER PROVED TO BE A FULLTIME JOB, AND LESS SO AFTER THE REMOVAL FROM BUENOS AIRES OF THE DEA REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS. THE RESIDUAL NARCOTICS COORDINATION, AS DISTINCT FROM DEA OPERATIONS, IS NOW DONE ON A PART-TIME BASIS BY THE COUNSELOR FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY.

7. USIS LOST ALL FIELD POSITIONS OUTSIDE OF BUENOS AIRES DUE TO THE SECURITY SITUATION. FIELD TRIPS FROM THE CAPITAL ARE NO ADEQUATE SUBSTITUTE SINCE THESE ARE LIMITED BY THE DEMANDS ON A REDUCED BUENOS AIRES STAFF. USIS HAS ALSO CURTAILED ALL PROGRAMMING IN BUENOS AIRES DUE TO REDUCTION OF AMERICAN PERSONNEL. HOWEVER, A GREATLY REDUCED USIS IMPACT MAY BE CONSISTENT WITH THE CHANGING TIMES AND NOT AFFECT THE US PRESENCE AND INTERESTS IN ARGENTINA.

8. A NOTICEABLE REDUCTION HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MILITARY GROUP AND THE THREE SERVICE MISSIONS ASSIGNED TO THE CORRESPONDING HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES. THIS HAS CAUSED SOME RESENTMENT IN ARGENTINE SERVICES, ESPECIALLY THE NAVY AND THE AIR FORCE WHICH FIND OUR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING OF GREAT HELP.

9. COMMENTS: EMBASSY BUENOS AIRES IS PROUD THAT IT HAS BEEN ABLE TO MEET ALL ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS IN SPITE

OF THE GREAT REDUCTION IN STAFF. WHILE WE ARE NOW OPERATING WITH A COMPLEMENT OF 88 AMERICANS, WE FEEL THAT A MORE REALISTIC FIGURE WOULD BE 92. THIS WOULD BE REACHED BY ADDING A BADLY NEEDED ADMINISTRATION OFFICER; BY EVENTUALLY MOVING THE AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE BACK TO BUENOS AIRES IF SECURITY SITUATION PERMITS; BY ADDING ONE PERSON TO THE AIR FORCE SECTION OF THE MILITARY GROUP; AND BY ADDING A SECRETARY FOR THE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNSELOR WHO ALSO ACTS AS THE NARCOTICS ADMINISTRATOR.

10. IT SHOULD NOT BE OVERLOOKED THAT BECAUSE OF SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS EMBASSY OFFICERS ARE NOT DOING ANY TRAVELLING TO THE PROVINCES. SHOULD THE SECURITY SITUATION IMPROVE MARKEDLY (NOT LIKELY IN THE SHORT TERM), THE EMBASSY WOULD INCREASE ITS COVERAGE OF THE PROVINCES AND WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO INCREASE ITS COMPLEMENT BY APPROXIMATELY FIVE PERSONS TO DO IT ADEQUATELY.
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